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SUBJECT Commentary on William Casey's Career

CARL GRANT: The death yesterday of former CIA Director William Casey will leave a lot of questions about the Iran-contra affair unanswered since he may have held the key to that unlocked and complicated controversy.

On today's Viewpoint, commentator Jeff Joseph says Casey should be remembered for the good job he did while at the helm of the agency and not for what he refused to tell Congress.

Jeff?

J JEFF JOSEPH: Death never comes at an opportune time. But the timing of William Casey's demise seems unusually inappropriate. As the Congress strives to uncover the myriad details of the Iran-contra arms deal, Casey's name keeps popping up. He was probably the only man who could answer any of the key questions, and he's taken his secrets to the grave with him.

The sale of arms to Iran and the transfer of funds to the contras was certainly not an every-day event. The controversy attached to it has thrown up a cloud of suspicion, some of which has attached to the Director of the CIA. It's unfortunate he's unable to respond to questions and defend his good name. For it must be remembered that, despite the current controversy, William Casey did have a good name. It's true that he could drive members of Congress up the wall when they inquired about the CIA's activities. He was often vague and elusive, and his mumbling speaking style was all but incomprehensible. One prominent senator said, only half in jest, that he would refuse to sanction the overthrow of any country Casey couldn't pronounce.

Still, the Director of the CIA operates in a shadowy

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world where candor is not a prized asset. It's a critical job requiring a person of integrity and judgment. Those who worked with Casey say he possessed those qualities in abundance.

William Casey took that tough, thankless job at a time in his life when most people are content to sit back and savor the fruits of a lifetime of work. He didn't take the job because he needed the money or had an axe to grind. It took it because he loved his country and believed in the principles it stands for. He was a dedicated patriot in the finest sense of the term and served his country well. His family can be proud of his contributions, as can we all.

And that's today's Viewpoint. I'm Jeff Joseph for Nation's Business Today.